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FLOWERING OF THE "GERMAN IVY."—In the March number of the NATURALIST is a communication on "German Ivy," and its "flowering under peculiar circumstances." The description given by Professor Gray is certainly very interesting and remarkable. Allow me to state that if this plant is taken in the spring and placed in the ground without a pot, then transplanted to a pot in the fall and cut down close to the roots shortly after the appearance of new shoots, flower buds, and flowers will follow. I send with this specimens of this plant which has been treated in this way, and so successful has it been, that efforts to *prevent* the plant from *blooming* have been *unavailing*, so *vigorously* does it *flower*. Is there an explanation possible why this plant and others of different species should blossom so profusely after such severe pruning?—JAMES L. LITTLE, JR.

A VARIETY OF THE COMMON AGRIMONY.—A variety of the common agrimony (*Agrimonia Eupatoria*) is occasionally found in this vicinity, having nine leaflets instead of seven, which is the usual number. In all other respects it appears to be identical with the ordinary form, except that it is, perhaps, a little taller, and occurs in rather more swampy localities.—T. MARTIN TRIPPE, *Orange Co., N. Y.*

ZOÖLOGY.

HOW SPIDERS BEGIN THEIR WEBS.—Early in the spring of 1866, while arrangements were making for photographing a live male of the *Nephila plumipes* (the so-called "Silk Spider of South Carolina"), the spider, after having several times traversed the circle of wire on which it was, suddenly stopped, took a firm position at the top of the frame and lifted the abdomen, pointing it toward a large skylight which occupied the middle of the ceiling: a slender, shining thread was seen to shoot forth from the spinnerets which occupy the end of the abdomen; it seemed to have a blunt, rounded extremity, which advanced through the air rather quickly for a few inches, but afterward more slowly and steadily, and with an upward tendency, but always in the direction of the skylight. When it had reached the length of five or six feet, I allowed it to become attached to my coat; the issue ceased at once, and the spider, having attached the end of the line, turned about and began to pull upon it. I now broke it off near the wire, and, believing that there was a current of air toward the skylight, I blew gently upon the spider from various directions, and found that it always pointed her abdomen in the direction in which I blew, and that the thread was emitted in the same direction. So that while it seemed to have the power of projecting a thread for a short distance, yet it always availed itself of the prevailing current of air.

This single instance by no means proves that all spiders do or can employ this method of bridging over spaces, and it may be that on ordi-

nary occasions they do, as every one has seen them, descend to the ground, emitting the thread as they advance, and pulling in the slack before attaching it to the desired point. But the former method enables them to cross water and to pass from tree to tree; while the well-known buoyancy of the silk permits them (or at least the smaller species) to sail along our water, hanging at the lower end of a line whose upper end is invisible.

In reference to this subject, see Kirby and Spence's *Entomology*, *Motions of Insects*, and *Manner in which they take their Food.*"—B. G. WILDER.

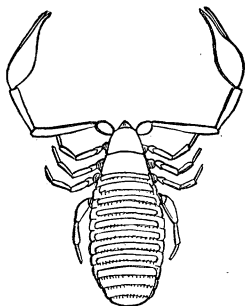
THE WOLVERENE.—The Wolverine follows the Beaver and preys upon them; in northern latitudes, the wolverene is almost always present where the beaver is abundant. The beaver has a beaten path on the bank of the stream near his lodge. There the wolverene lies in wait for him, and often cuts short his career. A half-breed Frenchman here owns a female of the bull-terrier breed, which follows the beaver to his lodge, and pulls him out, having sometimes a severe fight, and showing ugly cuts about the head, from the beaver's sharp teeth. The Indians offer a big price (a large buffalo horse) for the dog.—D. S. S., *Fort Sully, Dakota Territory.*

THE MOCKING BIRD.—I observe that while all the other song-birds are silent in our Southern forests and groves, the Mocking-bird is quite as musical as during the spring and summer. Several of them are singing on the topmost twigs of the oaks near my house most of the day. More than a dozen pairs of them built their nests within sight of the dwelling and out-buildings during the past spring and summer, all of them laying twice, and some three or more times. Few, however, succeeded in rearing their young, many of them being destroyed by snakes, and more by the persistent, but generally unsuccessful, attempts of the ladies of the family to domesticate them. Their first nests were invariably built in low bushes or on fences, but if these were disturbed, either before or after the hatching of the young, the parent birds, as if taught by experience, always built on trees, peach-trees being preferred. They came boldly to the house, and even into the rooms where we were sitting, to feed the young we had taken from them.—D. H. JACQUES.

THE DRAGON FLY.—Three years ago, in the middle of the summer, I was sitting in my tent, in camp, on the old battle-ground below New Orleans, when my attention was attracted by the swift flight of a large Dragon-fly, closely pursued by another of the same size. Twenty-five yards from my tent the fugitive was overtaken, and both fell to the ground together, tumbling over and over. I walked immediately to the place, and observed that in that very short time the creature had bitten his victim entirely in two, in the articulation just forward of the front wings, and had settled complacently to eating the body, commencing at the part he had bitten through. The head, thorax, and legs retained life, struggling and kicking vigorously during several hours I had the

opportunity to observe them. I will remark that the stagnant lagoons of Louisiana, and perhaps the abundant food, develop dragon-flies of a very large size. In view of the pest of mosquitoes, it is a pity the great insect-eater is not still more abundant.—D. S. S.

THE FALSE SCORPION.—These little scorpion-like animals are intermediate in structure between the mites and the spiders. We figure *Chelifer cancroides* L. kindly identified by Dr. Hagen, of the Cambridge Museum, who has studied our American species. He states that it seizes the legs of flies, and is thus transported about by them.



“The fact that an animal changes its location by means of another animal is interesting, and it is evident that this way is taken either from laziness, or from incapacity to accomplish his purpose in any other way. In the *Chelifer*, whose movements are slow, this means of locomotion is apparently adopted to find suitable food more easily. Necessarily such a state of things cannot be unique in natural history. I confess that at present I know nothing analo-

gous to it among insects except the case of the larva of *Meloë*, the well known *Triungulinus*, which creeps upon bees on purpose to be taken into their nests. Something analogous exists, I think, among fishes. *Echeneis remora* is often found attached to other fishes by a peculiar apparatus. But the purpose in the *Echeneis* is not very clear, for this species swims very quickly. The apparatus for the attachment of *Cyclopterus lumpus* is quite different; its purpose is not known.”—HAGEN.

The False-scorpion is about a quarter of an inch long, and may be observed moving with a curious sideways gait on opening old books, and in dusty places generally. It is said to hunt the flea vigorously, and also to devour the *Atropos*, or little white book-louse. It has also been found lurking under the elytra, or wing-covers of beetles, but it does not seem to be truly parasitic in its habits.

THE JACK-SNIPE.—While gunning one day on Jordan Creek, Lehigh county, Pennsylvania, I saw four little birds running along ahead of me, until they came near some clumps of grass, when they ran under the edges and hid themselves. I also, at the same time, saw one of the parent birds fly away. I caught one of the little fellows and examined him; he was about two or two and a half inches in height, of a light bluish-gray color above, and lighter on the breast; color of bill yellowish pink; eyes brown; legs greenish black.

The female (as it turned out to be) soon came and took up a little bird and carried it about one hundred yards to the mill-race. I should say flew with her load, as it seemed to me rather a great one for the old bird. She soon returned, and took up a second, flying off with it; and so the third and fourth. I then went to see where she had taken her family, and

found them in a nest of thin sticks and soft grasses on the ground, about two or three feet above the water as it made its exit from the mill. The nest was also near the mill, close to the water-wheel, near to where the water shot over the wheel. I shot the female, and I afterwards saw that the male bird was attending them as the female had done. It was the female and young of *Tringa maculata*.—WALTER J. HOFFMAN, *Reading, Pa.*

THE LOCUST KILLER.—I never saw but one of these wasps, and that was about two years ago, and then only for a few moments. It appeared to be marked almost, if not precisely, like a "hornet," and to be about two or two and a half inches in length, and large in proportion; truly a most formidable looking insect. The "killer" had seized one of our August locusts, and was endeavoring to rise from the ground with it, the locust clinging to the grass, and fluttering and screaming all the while. Before I could seize them, they rose from the ground and made off in a bee-line, at a height of about twelve or fifteen feet, the locust resisting with might and main. I am told they make nests in the ground, boring a hole to the depth of two or three feet. They must be rare, or I should have seen them before.—C. W. TAYLOR, *Hulmeville, Pa.*

The wasp is, probably, the *Stizus speciosus*, which seizes the Cicada to store its nest with, which is, probably, not more than a foot in depth. We hope our correspondent will observe its habits more closely, and send us specimens so that it can be identified with certainty.—EDS.

THE PRAIRIE DOG.—Among my observations on the prairie, I have learned that the prairie dog has a very destructive enemy in the Lynx, or American Wild-cat. This quick and fierce animal hides in the grass in the outskirts of the dog-town, and pounces upon any unlucky dog that starts out to forage, and carries him off before he can whisk his funny little tail.—D. S. S.

THE ROBIN AT FAULT.—A remarkable instance of the lack of the "bump of locality" in birds came under my observation some years ago. I had nailed a board of moderate width under the eaves of a barn to form a resting-place for the nests of the Cliff, or Jug-swallow. It was inclined at an angle so as to form a sort of trough. A robin commenced building her nest in it, but seeming unable to fix upon any particular spot, deposited the mud and straw along the entire length of the trough, about ten feet. After working several days, she abandoned her task. Shortly afterwards I saw a robin (whether the same bird or not I cannot say) attempting to build her nest in the same way, along the entire outer cornice of a house, about thirty feet.—A. P. R., *Geneva, N. Y.*

A VARIETY OF THE BLACKBIRD.—I suppose that almost every one is well acquainted with the general appearance of the Red-winged Starling, or Blackbird (*Agelaius Phoeniceus* Vieillot). Last May I shot, near Fresh Pond, in this vicinity, one of these birds having a crescent-shaped mark, of a bright orange-color on the breast; this was about equal in size

and form to the half of an old-fashioned copper cent, and the feathers were colored nearly to the roots. In other respects the bird was precisely similar to the ordinary male of this species.—WILLIAM BREWSTER, *Cambridge, Mass.*

THE BELTED KINGFISHER.—I observe a note concerning the nesting of the Belted Kingfisher in your November number, in which Mr. Fowler differs from Mr. Samuels. I now propose to be a connecting link between the two, and to say that I have *always* found the holes of *C. alcyon* "six or eight feet long," as Mr. S. says, and *always* "in the form of an elbow," as Mr. F. describes them; and that I have sometimes found a bed of sticks, grass, etc., and sometimes not. I wish, too, to ask if any one has ever known them to turn to the left, as I have never seen them branch otherwise than to the right.—W. E. ENDICOTT.

THE DWARF THRUSH IN MASSACHUSETTS.—A single specimen of the Dwarf Thrush (*Turdus nanus* Aud.) was obtained in Waltham, Mass., on Oct. 9, 1867. It was taken by Mr. L. L. Thaxter, and its identity was first discovered by Mr. C. J. Maynard, of Newtonville, Mass. The bird was found in high, dry woodland, not in a swampy locality, such as the nearly-allied species frequent.*—E. A. SAMUELS.

GEOLOGY.

THE BONE CAVES OF BRAZIL AND THEIR ANIMAL REMAINS. By Prof. J. Reinhardt.—The distinguished author, well known to zoölogists by his numerous and valuable contributions to the history of mammals (especially Cetacea), Birds, Reptiles, Fishes, etc., has favored one of the popular scientific journals† of his country with a detailed and very interesting account of "The Bone Caves of Brazil and their Animal Remains,"—a subject on which Professor Reinhardt, through his repeated travels in that country and his familiarity with its recent and Post-pliocene fauna,‡ must be regarded as one of the first authorities. In the hope that one of the many popular scientific journals of England will procure

*The following description of this bird corresponds essentially with that of Pacific specimens given by Professor Baird:—Upper mandible of bill, black; lower mandible, at the base and for half its length, yellow; at the tip, black, gradually fading into light brown towards the middle; the head above, and the back to the rump brownish-olive, becoming paler on the rump to the upper tail coverts, which are rufous; tail, both above and beneath, with a decided purple tinge, not rufous, as with *T. Pallasii*; chin, throat, and breast, pale buff, each feather having the tip marked with a large triangular spot of dark brown, which spots are less decided on the breast; sides grayish brown; belly and lower tail-coverts, pure white; on opening the wing, the broad buff band across the whole width within appears, as with *T. Pallasii*, but is a shade paler; iris brown; feet and tarsi paler brown; tail more rounded than *T. Pallasii*. Length, 6.70; breadth, 10.56; wing, 3.40; tail, 2.80 inch. The stomach was filled with small insects, principally beetles.

† Journal of Popular Science, Edited by C. Fogh and Dr. C. F. Luetken, Copenhagen, 1867.

‡ Dr. P. W. Lund's collections from the Brazilian caves in the Museum of Copenhagen are intrusted to the care of Professor Reinhardt.